

# European Identity Compared: A Mixed Methods Approach

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# European identity compared

## A mixed methods approach

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### Abstract

This article investigates the extent to which European identity has emerged in Europe, employing a cross-national comparison. The results of this quantitative analysis (multilevel regression analysis on *Eurobarometer* survey data) will subsequently be complemented with results from a qualitative inquiry among Polish higher educated youth, which was held in the framework of the same research project. The author argues that national and European political identifications are by no means mutually exclusive. In exploring the relation between both kinds of identity, individual and national characteristics are taken into account, and it is argued that mixed methods research designs offer a promising approach to the study of collective identities.

**Key words:** *European identity; mixed methods; multilevel analysis; EU enlargement; Poland*

# Introduction

Walking through Warsaw in December 2007, a quote on a billboard caught my attention:

We reject the notion of losing our sovereignty [...], we also reject the idea of a federal super-state [...]. We reject the idea of European citizenship [...]. We want to keep our frontiers [...]. Once inside the EU, within a few years we will have been radically bought out and deprived of our national identity.

— (Barski & Lipkowski, 1996)

This excerpt is a clear example of the political rhetoric that is very commonly used all over Europe by people opposing European integration. Becoming more ‘European’ is held to be synonymous with becoming less ‘national’, instrumentally utilizing a dichotomy in both space and time. It is an incarnation of the ‘tradition’ (or backwardness) versus ‘modernity’ (or progress) dichotomy of sorts.

In public debate the European Union is often depicted as an undemocratic, cumbersome institution, threatening the sovereignty and identity<sup>1</sup> of the nation-states within. “[M]any groups of people among the member nations perceive the EU as a political organization which diminishes national state sovereignty, and [these groups] resist the EU’s efforts at the creation of a ‘European identity’ as directly at odds with their own, superordinate national identities” (Wilson, 1996, p. 208). This perceived threat does not only exist in politics, but has also been shown to be present in the media and society at large in several empirical studies (see, for example Lubbers, 2008; Van Os, 2008). The Dutch and French referenda in 2005 rejecting the proposed European constitution<sup>2</sup>, and the rejection of the revised constitutional treaty in Ireland in 2008 are still vividly present in Europe’s recent political memory. In addition, extreme-right wing politicians in various countries in Europe have thrived, simply by evoking these images of ‘Europe’, urging people to ‘stand up’ for their country’s independence (see also McGuinness, 1996, pp. 64-79).

And yet, in contrast to what these outcomes might seem to suggest, “[s]upport for membership of the European Union is at its highest in over a decade” (European Commission, 2007b, p. 22). In the European Commission’s most recent *Eurobarometer* report<sup>3</sup>, on average 58% of all European citizens support their country’s EU membership, and there are no countries where support falls behind of opposition<sup>4</sup> (ibid.). Paradoxically, countries that may seem most eurosceptic in political discourse and media coverage often actually show the *highest* levels of public support. France and the Netherlands are notoriously remembered for rejecting the proposed constitution, but both have levels of public support comfortably above the EU average. The Netherlands even ranks second (79%) of all European nations. For Poland, recently portrayed as a new-found eurosceptic nation because of political debacles over various European issues (BBC News, 2006, 2007a, 2007b, 2007c; Kropiwnicki, 2007; Morris, 2004; Repa, 2006), the *Eurobarometer* report shows similarly high support (71%).

Where does this ambiguity come from? Certainly, “many groups of people” perceive the EU as a threat (Wilson, 1996, p. 208), but *which* groups of people do and do not feel this way *exactly*? *Why* do they perceive this threat, and precisely *how* do they construct their national and, perhaps, European identities? Is ‘Europe’ only perceived to be a threat to national sovereignty or are people’s opinions and attitudes not that consistent after all? In a rapidly evolving Europe these questions call for extensive and thorough answers. Providing these answers systematically requires a specific methodology, combining the width of quantitative research and the strategic depth of qualitative inquiry reality (see Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007, for a discussion on mixed methods research questions).

In this paper, I will *not* elaborate in detail on the ‘top-down’ elite constructions of ‘Europe’ and its identity, as has been done by Shore (2000). Neither will my focal point be to analyze symbolic and political / ‘official’ representations of Europe or the nation-state (cf. McNeill, 2004). What I *will*

concentrate on in this paper, is identification with Europe, and can actually be divided into two aspects. First, as McNeill points out: “[...] Europeanization may be simultaneously welcomed and fiercely resisted by different groups in the same national society” (2004, p. 37). I would like to add to this statement that Europeanization does not only meet ambiguous evaluations by different groups in the same nation, but that it may also be evaluated differently by the *same groups* in various contexts, and with regard to specific topics. Therefore, I will analyse to which extent ‘European identification’ exists, and according to which individual and national determinants it is distributed across the European Union. This will be achieved through the quantitative multilevel analysis of Eurobarometer data.

Second, in order to understand which social constructions of Europe and the nation-state underlie these ambiguous and sometimes paradoxical attitudes, it is necessary to comprehend what being or feeling ‘European’ actually *means* to the people expressing such feelings. This is therefore the second aspect of identification with Europe that is examined, which will be based on qualitative in-depth data gathered between October 2007 and February 2008 among Polish higher educated youth.

Below, I will first elaborate on the relevance of finding an adequate answer to the above questions. After that, I will provide a theoretical framework that is most heavily grounded in sociology and social/cultural anthropology, but extensively borrows from human geography and political sciences. After my theoretical point of departure has been made clear, I will proceed to presenting my empirical findings (quantitative and qualitative), my analyses, and a conclusion.

## Identification with Europe: why should we care?

There are several reasons why European identification is a highly relevant topic. Politically, the legitimacy of the European project may be at stake. It is often claimed that the citizens of the European Union have had little say in major political changes made in their name (i.e. the ‘democratic deficit’), and that one of the most prominent issues of the EU is that its institutions lack accountability (Carey, 2002, p. 388).<sup>5</sup> In addition, as Carey (2002, p. 388) also points out, the European Commission published a white paper in 2001 which emphasized the strengthening of a “European identity and the importance of shared values within the Union” (Commission of the European Communities, 2001, p. 27) in an effort to strengthen the EU’s ties with its citizens and thus improve its democratic legitimacy (see also McNeill, 2004, pp. 13-14; Sassatelli, 2002; Shore, 2000).<sup>6</sup>

Even though documents such as these show that the EU aims to strengthen ties with its citizens through what may be called the construction of European identity, questions on *how* these citizens make ‘Europe’ part of their social reality and discourse remain insufficiently investigated. With regard to theory, one could safely say that ‘European identity’ has been the subject of extensive research, but in very diverse ways. In my view, if we are to properly grasp European identity, we should not approach identification with Europe as necessarily conflicting with national identification. Underlying this misconception is the dubious assumption that if there is such a thing as European identity, then ‘Europe’ must be becoming a nation-state writ large (see Delanty, 2006; Risse, 2001; Risse, 2003, for a discussion). If we are to find and understand European identity, we should not let ourselves be misled too much by concepts and theories based on nation-state identifications. Looked at from this angle, the potential emergence of a European identity may provide us with the exciting opportunity to witness the birth a ‘new kind’ of identification that may well shape our social reality in the decades to come.

## The Europeanization of collective identities

Europe is ‘Europeanizing’. Economically, but also politically and even socially, the nation-states on the European continent are growing closer together. This changes the way we think about what a nation-state is, and what ‘national identity’ entails. It makes us wonder what ‘Europe’ is, what it means to be

'European', and whether there is such a thing as 'European identity'. It also fires up discussions about where the 'boundaries of Europe' are, and who is distinctly 'different' than 'us'. Europe's citizens will have to incorporate all of these questions into their social reality. The fundamental concept by which social, economic, political and cultural life in Europe (and beyond) has been organized for most of the last century has been the nation-state (McNeill, 2004, p. 36; Murray, 1998, p. 43). According to some, this dominance is under threat by European supranationalism.

In popular and even academic debate, national identity is often imagined to be at odds with European integration, and ceding responsibilities to 'Brussels' instead of (or in addition to) the national governments is equated with losing national independence. Politically, this rhetoric sometimes goes as far as equating all that is politically or culturally 'wrong' within a country with 'Brussels' and all that is 'good' with the national government or culture. Most often this is used by populist and/or eurosceptic political actors (see also Rupnik, 2007). However, even outside of the populist realm, such a politicized representation of reality has been expressed regularly (see Mau, 2005, p. 308).

Are we witnessing the political and social death of the nation-state in Europe as a result of European integration? I do not believe we are. The nation-state not only remains the primary unit of Western societal organization; it also continues to shape collective identities to an extent that is not likely to be overshadowed by any form of European identification in the foreseeable future (see Calhoun, 2007, chapter two; McNeill, 2004, p. 36). "Globalization challenges nation-states and intensifies flows across their borders, but it doesn't automatically make them matter less" (Calhoun, 2007, p. 9). The same can be said about Europe; even though social, cultural, economical and political cross-border flows intensify, this affects the *imagination* of the nation-states and of Europe; *how* they are socially constructed, not their legitimacy or even their existence.

McNeill (2004, p. 36) and others maintain that the debate on European political (and territorial) organization and identification is often excessively simplistic, and I concur. If we focus our attention on matters of social constructions and collective identification (instead of on economy and politics, for example), we would most likely conclude that European integration *will not* replace national identities. However, neither will European sociocultural, political, and economic integration be without any social consequences whatsoever. As with many things, matters are far more complex.

## European identity

Previous work on European identity has taken on various perspectives to empirically capture it. The theoretical starting point is often identification with the nation-state. There already exists an impressive array of literature on how people identify with their nations, so simply adapting this work to a European level is certainly tempting. Crucial to this approach, is that identification as a process always requires a significant Other for subsequent self-definition (see, among many others, Barth, 1969; Blok, 2000; De Swaan, 2001; Erikson, 1968; Jenkins, 2004). In order to apply nationalism theories on Europeanization, we should therefore define who or what Europe's Others are. For nation-states, these significant Others have traditionally been other nation-states. The most obvious Others for an emerging European identity that are most commonly suggested are the United States, Russia<sup>7</sup>, and more recently Islam and/or the Middle East (see Adamson, 2004; Balch, 2005; Benthall, 2004; Grillo, 2004; Strasser, 2008). Others have proposed that Eastern and Western Europe can be seen as each other's Others (cf. Kuus, 2004). An interesting perspective that is also regularly put forward is that European nation-states are socially constructed partly in opposition to Europe, and vice versa; Europe in opposition to nationalities (cf. Carey, 2002).

This last perspective in particular, joins together nicely with much of the public debate surrounding Europeanization that I illustrated earlier. If a power-struggle between national and

European identifications indeed is the case, it would be simple enough to determine which people identify themselves with Europe. When asked<sup>8</sup> in October/November 2005 whether they expect to feel citizens of their country and/or of Europe in the near future, 89% of all respondents still had a preference for their nationality<sup>9</sup>, while only 9% preferred to place feeling European over feeling national<sup>10</sup> (European Commission, 2006, p. 45). On the other hand, 55% of the people in the same survey occasionally thought of themselves “not only as nationality, but also European”, and 63% even felt “proud to be European”<sup>11</sup>.

Based on these figures, it seems that we should not conceptualize a potential identification with Europe as necessarily being mutually exclusive with nation-state identity. Many have argued for studying Europeanization as an entirely new form of social organization (Borneman & Fowler, 1997), and some have even suggested positive correlations between nation-state and European identifications (Bruter, 2003, p. 1154, see also; Duchesne & Frogner, 2008; McLaren, 2002, 2004). In fact, as Hutchinson argues, “[...] many, if not most, European national identities have been developed either alongside or in relation to a sense of Europeaness [...]” (2003, p. 37). So, instead of looking at Europeanization as the inevitable demise of the European nation-state, we should focus on the “more complex political process of repositioning, remapping, and rebranding of the nation-state” (McNeill, 2004, pp. 36-37), in order to understand European identity.

### Civic and cultural European identity

In two inspiring articles, Michael Bruter (2003, 2004) discusses citizens’ perceptions of news, symbols and “borderless-ness” with regard to their identification with Europe. In his analyses, he makes a very useful distinction between a ‘civic’ and a ‘cultural’ component of European political identity. By civic identity, Bruter means “the degree to which they feel that they are citizens of a European political system, whose rules, laws, and rights have an influence on their daily life” (2003, p. 1155). As he himself also notices, this component of identity is quite close to Habermas’s “constitutional patriotism” (1992). Cultural identity, on the other hand, refers to the perceived level of sameness with other Europeans. Bruter defines it as “individuals’ perception that fellow Europeans are closer to them than non-Europeans [...] regardless of the nature of the political system” (2003, pp. 1155-1156).

Bruter further argues that what is most often pursued both theoretically and empirically in academic literature dealing with the emergence of European identification, is actually only the *civic* component (2003, pp. 1167-1171; see also Loveless & Rohrschneider, 2008, paragraph 2.3). Also, a central conclusion that Bruter proposes is that, while the civic component appeals to citizens’ reason to a larger extent, the cultural component is more substantially driven by collective symbols and images of Europe (ibid.). The answer to the question *which* specific features are thought of by citizens as ‘European’ with regard to cultural European identity, however, is very likely to vary across countries, regions, and even individuals. For some, what binds Europeans may be an ideal of peace and openness, while for others, it may be Europe’s ‘Christian heritage’. Bruter acknowledges this too, and examines these differences in a qualitative comparison of focus groups run in France, the UK, and the Netherlands (Bruter, 2004). His most interesting findings with regard to the aims of my own study are that the members<sup>12</sup> of his focus groups expressed an image of Europe that emanates peacefulness, prosperity, co-operation, harmony, and educational and cultural initiatives (Bruter, 2004, pp. 28, 30).

In order to make clear his distinction between civic and cultural political identities, Bruter asked his respondents whether, in their view, “[...] European identity and being ‘for’ Europe were the same thing” (2004, p. 34). None of the participants in the focus groups agreed to this proposition. They clearly differentiated between “support for a project”, Bruter’s civic identity, and “the emergence of a new identity”, the cultural dimension (ibid.). Perhaps it would have been more useful for Bruter’s argument at this point to more clearly distinguish between ‘Europe’ and the EU. On the other hand,

such a differentiation might not be that salient in the minds of his respondents in the first place. One could argue that in this way, the EU's policies in this field are shaping an identity that stretches further than its territorial limits.

When it comes to defining European identity, Bruter finds two sets of descriptions among his respondents. Some define it in a similar fashion as they would have described their national identity, referring to a sense of being in the same society, regardless of local differences. This definition seems best compatible with Bruter's civic political identity. Others described feeling European because of certain values like cross-national/cultural mixing, cosmopolitanism, and, again, co-operation. This type, of course, concurs with the cultural political identity component. According to Bruter, respondents were divided on "[...] whether Europe is an anti-national or a meta-national construct [...] as much as it divides political scientists" (2004, p. 34).

## Data and methods

In my empirical analyses, I will take Bruter's distinction between a civic and a cultural component of European identification as my main point of departure. I will first quantitatively compare all current EU member states on a measurement of identification with Europe. Second, I will provide the results of a more in-depth, qualitative analysis of the social process that is European identification.<sup>13</sup> This has the advantage that it enables us to understand the underlying social imaginings of Europe and the nation-state. For this second purpose, I have chosen one very specific, but highly relevant group of people: Polish higher educated youth. I decided to analyze this group based on a number of arguments, which could methodologically be summarized as 'critical case sampling' or 'theoretical sampling' (Teddlie & Yu, 2007, pp. 80-83). This purposive sampling strategy complements the probability sampling approach of the quantitative research style, grounding the overall project in a 'sequential mixed methods sampling' approach (Teddlie & Yu, 2007, pp. 90-91). See Appendix I for an overview of the *complete* mixed methods research process. Below, I will first discuss the quantitative data and scales, which relate to the European Union as a whole. After that, I will provide my arguments for focusing on Polish higher educated youth.

### Quantitative data and measurements

The quantitative analyses provided in this paper are based on the *Eurobarometer* series data, gathered quite regularly by the European Commission.<sup>14</sup> The survey is conducted two to five times per year, and consists of approximately 1,000 respondents per EU member state<sup>15</sup>. The most significant limitation of the *Eurobarometer* studies, and many other measurements that have not been tailored to meet the requirements of a specific project, is that it does not provide a direct measurement of the dependent variable. European identity can therefore only be traced using an indirect measure.

For this purpose, I have constructed two scales measuring European identity. The first one is very similar to the one used by Bruter (2005a, p. 198) and Lubber & Scheepers (2005), and indeed measures European *civic* identification with the EU. This enables me to build on the validity of the measure already established by these prior studies. In the construction of this first scale, the question whether the respondent's country has benefited from EU membership was recoded to range from zero to one (the country has benefited (1) or has not (0)). Similarly, the question whether it is a good or a bad thing that the respondent's country is a member of the EU ranged from one to three, but was recoded to range from zero (a bad thing) to one (a good thing). Respondents who answered that it is 'neither good nor bad' were given the value 0.5 (cf. Lubbers & Scheepers, 2005, p. 240). For both variables in this scale, people who provided a 'don't know' answer, or no answer at all to *both* questions, were given a

missing value on the resulting scale for civic identification. In all other cases, the scale is equal to the mean value of both variables.

The second scale used in the analyses is constructed to measure the 'softer' cultural component of European identification. Bruter himself did not use this scale, which is why I constructed this scale to measure the respondent's 'emotional sense of belonging' to Europe myself. The *Eurobarometer* surveys have occasionally asked respondents to grade their attachment to their town, region, country, and to Europe, which is a good candidate for measuring this aspect of identification with Europe. The problem that Bruter, referring to Burgess (2000), sees with this measurement, is that it remains unclear whether respondents are in fact talking about the same thing. He argues that it is questionable "whether identity is measurable by self-perception" (Bruter, 2005a, p. 102). According to him, respondents might not refer to "the same fundamental definitions and conceptions of identity" (ibid.). However, I argue that the question as it is posed in the *Eurobarometer* survey allows respondents to express an emotional attachment to given political concepts, and whether or not they have the same 'definition' of what an *identity* actually is, seems to me of less importance. In the end, the researcher determines whether such an expression fits his or her definition of identification; whether 'attachment' is a satisfactory measure of identification. I agree with Bruter that identity may not always be measurable by self-perception. However, in the case of European identification I would argue that any self-perception of a European identity is likely to be an under-representation of *potential* identification with Europe because identity is by definition contextual.<sup>16</sup>

The eventual scale for measuring cultural identification with Europe is constructed based on two variables present in the *Eurobarometer* surveys. First, as noted, I included people's 'attachment' to Europe. Additionally, in order to compensate to some extent to Bruter's comments on the validity of this measure, I included the item measuring how 'proud to be European' people say to be. This way, the measurements are not merely limited to the contested item that I described above. Both variables were recoded to range from 0 (no attachment/pride) to 1 (highest degree of attachment/pride), and the mean of these two values was taken as the scale for cultural European identification.

I will use multilevel regression analysis (for an overview of this technique, see Heck & Thomas, 2000; Kreft & De Leeuw, 1998; Snijders & Bosker, 1999) to compare countries within Europe and individuals within countries. Before doing so, I will conduct several test to establish the empirical distinction between both scales of European identity. A factor analysis revealed that the four items<sup>18</sup> used to measure European identity could indeed be divided into two distinct factors, also when similar measurements for national identification were included in the analysis (see Appendix II). Both resulting scales correlated significantly with sufficient strength,<sup>20</sup> and turned out to form reliable scales.<sup>21</sup> The two scales are significantly and positively correlated (0.334 Pearson correlation,  $p < 0.01$ ), which is not very surprising; people feeling identifying more strongly with Europe can be expected to support its political and economic integration as well.

### **Qualitative data: Polish higher educated youth**

For an in-depth analysis of European identification, I decided to focus on Polish higher educated youth. During the fieldwork period in which I gathered my qualitative data (October 2007 – February 2008), I spent my time observing and talking to members of this specific group, and trying to understand their view of Europe and Poland. I interviewed them, but I also carefully observed their behaviour, and participated in their social events (cf. Spradley, 1979, 1980). They were my teachers, educating me in how to see the world and specifically Europe through *their* eyes. Many also became good friends, not only making my stay in Poland a warm and exciting experience, but also allowing me to 'feel' their emotional attachment to Poland and Europe. My fieldwork concentrated around the city of Kraków, but occasionally I also ventured out of the city to meet informants or conduct observations. As I mentioned



earlier, my decision to focus on this specific group was based on 'critical case sampling' or 'theoretical sampling' (Teddlie & Yu, 2007, pp. 80-83). Here, I will elaborate on why I believe this group is a critical case, and why analysis of these people's views is theoretically important.

First, I think that Poland is an interesting case for studying the emergence of a European identity because it is one of the EU's 'new' member states. If there is such a thing as an emerging European identification, then it is crucial to examine this process at its early stages. Of course, one should not assume that an identification with Europe only emerges when a country enters the EU. However, the way in which this shapes people's thinking on 'Europe' does tell us something on how cultural identification may be related to civic identities (national or European). Furthermore, acceding to the EU in the largest expansion of the organization in history, and being one of the first countries from the former Eastern bloc to enter, it takes up a rather unique place in the development of Europe as an 'integrated' polity. Moreover, its EU membership is already surrounded with apparent inconsistencies, as it is portrayed as one of Europe's most eurosceptic countries in the media, while at the same time, survey data suggests that Poland is also one of the most supportive countries when it comes to European integration (see introduction). Furthermore, Poles have been reported to show one of the highest levels of national pride in Europe (Jasińska-Kania & Marody, 2004, p. 230).

Historically, Poland has been torn between Eastern and Western Europe. Throughout the ages it has entertained passionately friendly relations with countries to the East (e.g. Lithuania) and the West (e.g. France). It has, however, also waged war in both directions, frequently fighting (among others) Muscovite or Russian armies in the East, and German or Austrian forces in the (South-) West. In the contemporary international political context, Polish identity is being recalibrated towards a European frame of reference. A telling example of how Poland, the largest 'new' EU member state, is claiming its place in its 'return to Europe' (see Maier & Risse, 2003), is the Polish stance in the discussion on the preamble to the 'European Constitution', and later the Lisbon Treaty. In this dialogue, Poland was one of the countries that seemed to be most in favour of including a reference to Europe's Christian heritage in the Treaty.

I have chosen to focus on contemporary youth because they are the only living generation that is politically 'conscious', yet generally has only marginal personal memories of communist times. This period in Polish history is normally conceived of as an age of restricted political and economic freedom. This is often rhetorically contrasted by present times, that are supposedly characterized by virtually unbridled mobility and freedom. In the interviews that I had with my informants, some did remember particular personal events that they specifically associated with this period of their nation's past. In virtually all cases, these memories were restricted to queues in front of shops without knowing what you were standing in line for. Others recalled family members bringing in goods from the West. My oldest informants were aged around 30, which would mean that they were 12 when the communist regime in Poland was effectively overthrown. Most, however, were in their early or mid-twenties, which means that they were 4-9 years old at that time. These are hardly ages in which a person can be expected to be sensitive to the macro-political context of that time. What they *have* experienced, however, is how their parents and grandparents represented the period before their birth and the early years of their lives. This creates a unique generation that – as a general rule – does not have any first-hand recollection of political hardship, but *does* have a strong image of such struggle engrained into their consciousness through the construction of collective memories (see Assmann, 2002; Halbwachs, 1992).

Thanks to the opening up of frontiers and job markets, young Polish people are experiencing something which has never previously been known in Poland's history. They can leave the country and come back to it without any problem, they can learn about different cultures, different solutions and ways of life and, thus, enrich their own experiences and ideas. They will return and will change Poland.

— Henryk Wujec,<sup>22</sup> Warsaw, July 2007, "Unia & Polska" issue 130/2007

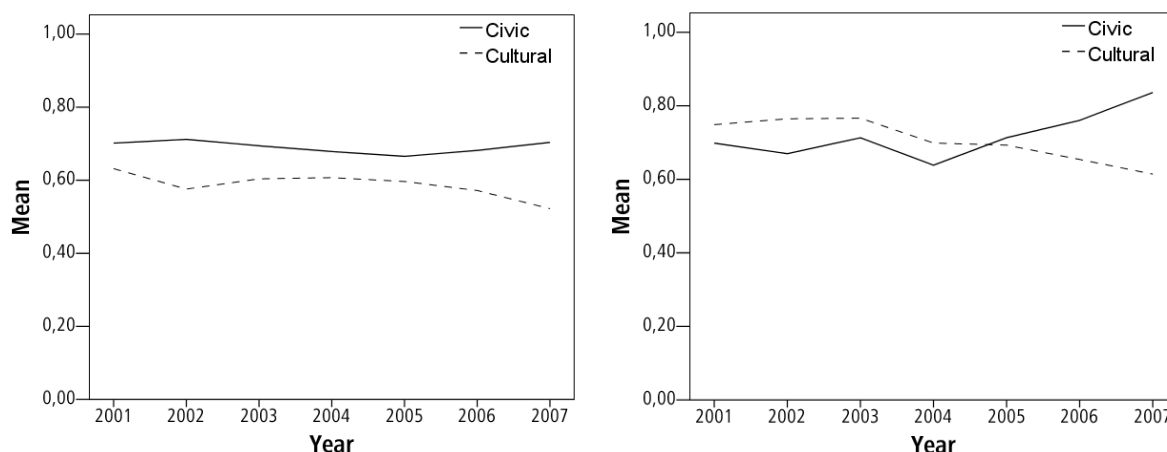
The above quote nicely illustrates another argument for choosing to analyse this specific group based on their age. They are the first Polish generation to experience the 'fruits' of European integration from close-by, at a personal level, and from an early age onwards. No other cohort still alive has experienced such a degree of geographically and politically unhindered access to large parts of Europe. In a few years time, this generation will have matured completely, and they may have come to expect nothing less than 'borderless' mobility in Europe. They are part and parcel of a cohort that is not only connected to their country of origin, but also to members of the same generation in other parts of Europe or even the world.

This argument is especially salient for *higher educated* youth and students, as they can be expected to maintain cross-national social networks to a greater degree than their lower educated counterparts.<sup>23</sup> It is *this* generation and educational group, the 'Erasmus Generation' as it has also been called (Rifkin, 2004, p. 2), that will create the Europe of the coming few decades. They are the soon-to-be European elite shaping the future of the continent, and yet we know very little about their views on this future. A whole generation of higher educated people with a distinctly different frame of reference than many of their parents will soon have a profound impact on politics and culture. Moreover, for such a 'European' frame of reference to emerge, one would expect that history needs to be partly reinvented as well. While old rivalries between, say, Germany and Poland might be perceived to be of less importance, other rifts (most likely *vis-à-vis* Russia) might be imagined to become greater (see also Zarycki, 2004).

## European identity cross-nationally: a quantitative analysis

It was between 2001 and 2007 that the EU experienced its largest expansion in history. Also, several countries 'physically' enforced the provisions of the Schengen Treaty (i.e. 'opening' borders), and the Euro was introduced in an additional number of countries. The development of respondent's civic and cultural attitudes towards Europe during this period is shown in the graphs below.<sup>27</sup> These trends are depicted for Europe as a whole (left) and Poland in particular (right). The straight line depicts respondent's mean civic identification with Europe, while the dotted line represents people's mean cultural identification. These graphs clearly show different developments of civic and cultural identification between 2001 and 2007. Moreover, the developments for the EU as a whole are rather different from those for Poland in particular. This reinforces the importance of choosing Poland for an in-depth case study in the second section of this paper.

**Figure 1** - Civic and cultural identification with Europe between 2001-2007 for EU27 (left) and Poland (right).



As we can see for the EU as a whole, both identification components remained relatively stable between 2001 and 2007. This pattern is quite similar to that of most 'old' EU member states in the Western part of the continent. In Poland, up until 2004 the level of cultural identification with Europe was actually higher than the level of civic identification. This is remarkable, because it is one of the very few countries where this was the case.<sup>28</sup> In 2004, the year of accession for many new EU member states in Central and Eastern Europe, the graph for Poland shows that civic identification started to increase quite strongly, overtaking cultural identification, which stayed more or less stable or even declined somewhat.

This development can be explained by seeing it in the light of Poland's rhetorical 'return to Europe' (see Aniot, 1997; Mach, 1993a, 1997, 2000, 2001; Maier & Risse, 2003). I would argue that before 2004, when Poland was not yet a member of the EU, people tended to express a relatively high level of *cultural* identification with Europe because it allowed them to (1) identify with a positively evaluated group (cf. Tajfel & Turner, 1979), and (2) assert boundaries towards one of Poland's most significant European Others: Russia (Zarycki, 2004). After 2004 this cultural identification decreased somewhat towards the EU average. The civic component then took over much of this identification, which makes sense, as Polish citizens actually *became* European citizens in the legal sense of the word. Difference did not need to be asserted through a cultural attachment to 'Europe' anymore; they had 'hard proof' of their Europeanness. The boundaries had become more clear (cf. Blok, 2000). Differently put, these figures are not a *direct* measurement of identification, but they show how Europeanness is *expressed* (i.e. through a cultural or civic discourse). Therefore, I argue that these changes through time show how the *discourse* on Polish Europeanness has changed. Where they would first express it through a *cultural* discourse, the accession in 2004 gave Poles other, *civic* means by which they could assert their European identity, simultaneously reaffirming their difference towards 'less European' nations (e.g. Russia and Belarus; see Zarycki, 2004).

**Table 1 - Multilevel regression models of the cultural component of European identification (0=low – 1=high).**

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5		Model 6		Model 7	
	b	s.e.	b	s.e.	b	s.e.	b	s.e.	b	s.e.	b	s.e.	b	s.e.
Intercept	.590**	.014	.512**	.015	.539**	.015	.279**	.013	.290**	.016	.850**	.117	.329**	.157
<b>Individual characteristics</b>														
<i>Control variables</i>														
Age (0=15)			.000**	.000	.000**	.000	-.001**	.000	-.001**	.000	-.001**	.000	-.001**	.000
Gender (1=female)			-.007**	.002	-.004*	.002	-.006**	.002	-.007**	.002	-.007**	.001	-.007**	.001
Education (years)			.004**	.000	.003**	.000	.003**	.000	.003**	.000	.003**	.000	.003**	.000
Left-right placement (0=left, 9=right)			.008**	.000	.007**	.000	.004**	.000	.004	.003	.004	.003	.004	.003
<i>Social position</i>														
Student (ref.)					(ref.)		(ref.)		(ref.)		(ref.)		(ref.)	
Manager					.015**	.003	.009**	.003	.008**	.003	.008**	.003	.008**	.003
White collar					-.013**	.003	-.013**	.003	-.013**	.003	-.013**	.003	-.013**	.003
Manual labour					-.035**	.003	-.034**	.002	-.034**	.002	-.034**	.002	-.034**	.002
House work					-.032**	.004	-.035**	.003	-.034**	.003	-.035**	.003	-.035**	.003
Unemployed					-.042**	.004	-.034**	.003	-.033**	.003	-.034**	.003	-.034**	.003
Retired					-.011**	.003	-.016**	.003	-.016**	.003	-.018**	.003	-.018**	.003
<i>National identity</i>														
Emotional national identity (0-1)							.389**	.003	.376**	.021	.377**	.021	.376**	.021
Fear loss of national identity (0-1)							-.094**	.002	-.090**	.002	-.091**	.002	-.091**	.002
<b>National characteristics</b>														
Years of EU membership											-.031**	.001	-.031**	.001
<i>Iron Curtain variables</i>														
Former USSR satellite (ref.)													(ref.)	
Former USSR territory													.102~	.268
Never in Eastern Bloc													.780**	.174
<b>Variances</b>														
Variance level 1 (individual)	.073**	.000	.072**	.000	.072**	.000	.063**	.000	.062**	.000	.062**	.000	.062**	.000
Variance level 2 (country)	.006**	.002	.006**	.001	.006**	.002	.005**	.001	.007**	.002	.389**	.105	.240**	.066
Variance left-right placement									.000**	.000	.000**	.000	.000**	.000
Variance emotional national identity									.012**	.003	.012**	.003	.012**	.003
<b>-2 log likelihood</b>														
Improvement	27338.445		25612.697		25159.325		9784.480		8155.938		7382.561		7367.216	
			1725.748		453.372		15374.845		1628.542		773.377		15.346	

Source: Eurobarometer 62.0, 63.4, 64.2, 65.2, 66.1 (2004/2005/2006), added contextual characteristics.

Notes: \*\* p < 0.01; \* p < 0.10; ~ p < 0.10. N<sub>i</sub>=122,484, N<sub>j</sub>=29.

## Who feels European?

It is the *cultural* rhetorical strategy that enabled Poland's 'return to Europe' even before its accession to the European Union (see above). It represents the European identity of people even without taking into account their evaluation of their country's EU membership. The level of *civic* identification may have various different causes, ranging from a respondent's emotional or political attachment to Europe (Lubbers & Scheepers, 2005; McLaren, 2002), to her judgement on the EU's achievements in specific policy areas (Lubbers & Scheepers, 2007; Luedtke, 2005; Mau, 2005). Therefore, I argue that the *cultural* identification component is closer to an emotionally expressed European identity. Moreover, civic identification has been the (explicit or implicit) subject of a number of prior studies (e.g. Bruter, 2005b; Lubbers & Scheepers, 2005, 2007; Luedtke, 2005; Mau, 2005). For these reasons, I have chosen to focus on the *cultural* component of European identity for my multilevel regression analysis (see Table 1).

The 'null-model' (model 1), shows that countries are sufficiently different with regard to the cultural identity component to justify multilevel analysis. The subsequent models include individual level variables, and models 6 and 7 include national level characteristics as well. Finally, the improvement of the -2 log likelihood indicates the increasingly better fit of the models (lower is better). Below, I will consecutively discuss the effect on expressed cultural identification of a respondent's age, education, their political orientation, their social position (i.e. students), and their identification with the nation-state. Then, I will look at contextual (i.e. national) differences, and how these affect the level of cultural identification with Europe. There, I will first go into the varying effects of national identity and political (left-right) orientation in different countries, and then test the effect of the duration of a country's EU membership and its post-socialist past.

### *Individual characteristics*

With regard to the effect of age, there are two aspects of this measurement that should be taken into account. Firstly, younger people as a generation were born in a globalized, transnational era, which arguably makes them culturally skilled and more flexible in cross-cultural/national exchange than people from generations before them. Secondly, prior empirical research has repeatedly suggested that the younger people are, the more flexible they generally respond to social change (cf. Lubbers, 2008; Lubbers & Scheepers, 2007). Considering Poland's relatively recent communist experience, its subsequent national independence, and its contemporary accession to the EU makes for a radically changing political context. The more elaborate models corroborate these argumentations, as they show that older people are less likely than younger people to express a cultural identification with Europe.<sup>29</sup>

Regarding the respondents' level of education, there are four arguments that I would like to present. First, I argue that higher educated people are more likely to entertain transnational social networks than are lower educated people because of the 'international' context of the professions of the higher educated. In turn, these are likely to lead to expanded *informal* social networks as well. Being connected to people from other cultures in such a way leads to the need for acquiring a cultural framework that is adapted to such a context (Ultee, 1989, p. 15). Such a framework could easily evoke feelings of 'feeling' European, since it is by definition transnational. Second, education can be seen as a proxy for measuring intercultural and language capabilities. With regard to the latter, one could argue that being able to speak at least English as a second language is an increasingly important aspect of any higher educated profession. Third, higher educated people benefit most directly (or most visibly) from cross-border flows of capital, goods and knowledge (Ultee, 1989). While national elites converge to form a new European elite, lower strata remain 'national' in their orientation, and may even emphasize these 'allegiances' in a response to the 'loss' of national culture that they perceive. If this holds true, then European societies potentially face a new and growing kind of inequality; the 'European gap'. Finally,

higher educated individuals are more likely to participate in, or at least follow debates concerning the EU, which potentially makes them feel more involved with it as well (Inglehart, 1970; McLaren, 2001, p. 90). Based on these four arguments, I would expect that the higher educated people are, the more likely it is that they express a cultural identification with Europe. This is, indeed, confirmed by the significant positive regression coefficients for the years of education in models 2 through 7.

My informants in the case study that I will present in the second section of this paper were not only higher educated and relatively young, most of them were also *students*. Although age and education are two of the most defining characteristics of what it means to be a 'student', it does not cover all aspects of this social role. To account for this, I compared students to other social groups in society. The variables that I included are all 'dummies', with students as the reference category. Students are likely to travel even more than their non-student counterparts, and participate in international educational networks and programmes (of which the Erasmus programme is the most striking example). As a result, they build and maintain more elaborate international networks, facilitated through modern communication technologies. A more 'international' orientation should subsequently have a positive effect on their cultural identification with Europe. The regression analysis indeed shows that students express significantly higher levels of cultural identification with Europe than all other layers of society except managers. This seems to confirm that the contemporary student's social reality should be conceptualized within a European frame of reference, even if we control for age.

Concerning the political orientations of respondents, I decided to include the subjective position on the leftwing – rightwing continuum. Here, people were asked to place their ideological political views in a continuum ranging from 1 (left-wing) to 10 (right-wing). As McLaren suggest, "individuals on the left appear to be more open to changes in society" (2001, p. 89). This would make them feel more positive about the macro-political changes involved in European integration than their rightwing counterparts. Conversely, models 2, 3, and 4 suggest that people on the right of the political range express a stronger cultural identification with Europe than people on the left. McLaren explains such relations by saying that economically leftist individuals might object to the 'capitalist' nature of the EU (McLaren, 2002, p. 562). However, this should not necessarily have an impact on people's *cultural* identification with Europe, as this explanation explicitly refers to the European Union rather than 'Europe' as a cultural concept. A tentative<sup>30</sup> answer to this issue could be derived from the historical development of civic and cultural identification that I described above, as it suggests that the European Union might in fact have taken over some of the symbolic associations with 'Europe' as a broader concept (and vice versa).

European and national identifications may or may not be perceived to be hierarchically related, and they may or may not be conceptualized as being incompatible (Carey, 2002; Deflem & Pampel, 1996; Duchesne & Frogner, 2008; Hooghe & Marks, 2005; McLaren, 2002, 2004, 2006; Smith, 1992). I contend that they are *not* necessarily mutually exclusive, as I have argued above. If this holds true, then an individual's identification with his or her nation(s) should not have a significant negative impact on their identification with Europe in my analysis. In fact, building on Duchesne & Frogner (2008), I would expect that a strong identification with the nation has a *cumulative* relation to European identification. This expectation is indeed supported by the analysis, as models 4 through 7 show. In fact, the greatest improvement in model fit occurs when the national identity variables are included, which indicates the importance of this measure. The 'emotional' national identification has a significant *positive* effect on European cultural identity, which confirms my argument against conceptualizing national and European identities as mutually exclusive. This corroborates outcomes found in other recent studies<sup>32</sup> (Duchesne & Frogner, 2008; McLaren, 2004).

Fear of *losing* one's national identity to 'Europe', on the other hand, has a significant negative impact on European cultural identification. This intriguing result can be explained by considering which

associations are activated when a respondent is confronted with questions such as these. Here, the common assumption that Europe and the nation are mutually exclusive is activated. If a respondent is asked to rate his/her attitude towards Europe, this attitude is likely to be more positive than when the same respondent is confronted with the same question, but in explicit opposition to the nation. If the nation is explicitly placed in opposition to Europe, then 'Europe' becomes a threat, while if the nation is not mentioned in the question, but one is merely asked to express an attachment to or pride of Europe, these 'nested' levels of identity do not exclude each other. In other words; when asked to pick sides between either Europe *or* the nation, most people are inclined to choose the latter (see Duchesne & Frogner, 2008, pp. 154-155, for a similar line of argumentation).

### ***National characteristics***

In my discussion above, I focused on the effects of individual characteristics on cultural identification with Europe. In the following paragraphs, I will devote more attention to national differences. The nation-state is still Europe's primary source of collective identification (Calhoun, 2007), so national characteristics are likely to define how 'Europe' is framed as well; *especially* when it comes to identification. Furthermore, determining whether European and national identities are mutually exclusive or not is one of the central arguments of this paper.

Against this backdrop, I chose to estimate national identity and the respondent's subjective left-right placement as a random effect. From model 5 onwards, I allowed these items to vary randomly across countries. This means that instead of estimating a 'fixed' effect for these variables *across* countries (i.e. for the whole of Europe), the effect of these variables is estimated *within* countries. The variance results for model 5 indicate that the difference in effect of national identity is significant across countries.<sup>34</sup> More importantly, it shows that even if we allow the effect of national identification to be different for every country, an emotional attachment to the country is still more likely to go together with a stronger sense of European identity.

Subjective left-right placement should be expected to have different results in various European countries, because being 'left' is very likely to mean something entirely different in especially post-socialist and western European countries. While inhabitants of the former may often equate (moderate) leftist ideology with political correctness, citizens of the latter are likely to associate it with their communist pasts. This indeed holds true in the present analysis, as the variance across countries is highly significant. This argument is further supported by the fact that all regression models that include left-right placement as a *random* effect do not show a significant effect of the *main* variable for left-right placement, while the models with this variable as a *fixed* effect do.

As I have suggested above, people's cultural and civic identifications with Europe are interrelated. Therefore, I expect that the years of membership of a given country has an effect on the people's *cultural* identification with Europe (in addition to their civic identity, as the graphs on page 10 suggest). In which way exactly, however, is subject to debate. When it comes to civic identification, it is often argued that the longer a country is a member of the EU, the more people feel to be citizens of this polity (i.e. civic identity; see Anderson & Reichert, 1996; Bruter, 2005a, p. 31; Greenstein, 1965; Hix, 2005; Inglehart, 1971; Lubbers & Scheepers, 2007, p. 649). However, I argue that the opposite is likely to be true when it comes to *cultural* identification; that citizens of countries that have been a member of the EU for a relatively long period are actually *less* likely to express a cultural European identity. I suggest that individuals in 'old' member states may have grown to take 'Europe' at their doorstep for granted. Unhindered border passage, for example, has been a reality in many of these countries for a great number of years. Grand 'ideals' of the European project such as peace and prosperity have been mostly already achieved in most if not all of the 'old' member states, for over a generation (or two). Conversely, several of the 'newer' members have quite a recent history (or at least contemporary

collective memory) of external suppression and less than ideal economic circumstances. For them, wanting to 'belong' to Europe may still have the connotation of these grand ideals that may well have faded away in 'older' member states. Additionally, as the graphs in Figure 1 on page 10 suggests, a civic identity may 'take over' from the former cultural identification with Europe, in a way 'channelling' identification through a formalized 'state-like' conception. As models 6 and 7 show, a longer membership period indeed *decreases* people's cultural identification with Europe, confirming the above arguments.

Finally, in 2009 the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the collapse of the Soviet Union will be celebrated in many Eastern and Central European countries. The fact that one can expect that Russia will not 'celebrate' this fact as enthusiastically as these countries illustrates how the past still resonates in the present. The post-socialist past of many current EU member states is inherently present in people's political conceptions, and cannot be ignored in this analysis. Many might see their country's association with 'Europe' as an instrument in their move away from Russia, asserting their independence from their former oppressor. If this is true, these people will identify more strongly with the concept of 'Europe'. In my analysis, I included dummies for the countries' former involvement in the 'Eastern Bloc'. As my focus is more heavily on Poland, I chose to use former USSR satellite states as the reference category. The people from the former USSR territories (the Baltic countries) do not convincingly differ from the former USSR satellites, but do 'hint' towards culturally identifying more strongly with Europe. Furthermore, people from the former USSR satellite states generally express significantly lower levels of cultural identification with Europe than people who are not from former Eastern Bloc countries at all. This result is not completely consistent with what I would expect to encounter based on my argument above. Nevertheless, bearing in mind that these effects are controlled for the effect of the number of years of EU membership,<sup>36</sup> this result once again suggests that a civic identification with the EU has begun to 'take over' a part of people's cultural identification with 'Europe'.

In the above sections, I have elaborated on my theoretical framework, introduced my data and methods, and discussed the results of my quantitative analysis. Below, I will present the results of my qualitative case study among higher educated Polish youth. After that, I will offer my conclusions to the article as a whole.

## Polish higher educated youth: qualitative findings

While the analysis of *Eurobarometer* survey data offers an excellent way to gain insight into which people in which countries identify with Europe, it does far less to enable us to understand what being European 'means'. When it comes to European identification, a quantitative analysis *on its own* really can be seen as only scratching the surface of the complete picture. In order to fill this gap, I will discuss my conclusions regarding the Polish higher educated case that I examined qualitatively in the paragraphs below. I have organised this section into two main themes that arose from the analysis of the interview data. Both themes together show how the Polish higher educated youth that I interviewed constructed their European identity, and how cultural (e.g. shared historical experiences) and civic (e.g. EU accession) played a role in this.

First, I will go into the way in which my informants defined their own identity by setting social boundaries based on generational difference rather than nationality. This difference was expressed through a conception of a 'communist heritage', and came to the fore quite explicitly during the 2007 national elections. After that, I will continue with second theme of this section which deals with the concept of 'Central Europe'. The way in which my informants dealt with the generational difference and the 'communist heritage' that they perceived to exist, was to construct a sense of social change. 'Central



Europe' was predominantly used to express this change, as it allowed for the continuous blurring of boundaries between East and West; past and future.

### The 'student generation' and the 'communist heritage' in Polish politics

For the Polish youth that I interviewed, when talking to them about 'being Polish' and/or 'European', differentiation towards significant Others did not primarily lie in nationality, but in "generation". They saw themselves as members of the generation that will deal with Poland's difficult past; as a generation that will rise above the disagreements that Europeans have had in the past. The only problem in achieving this, however, was that – according to them – the image that people from other countries have of Poland is still continuously stained by remainders of a 'communist heritage'. They are 'stuck' with this 'old generation' who is 'still afraid' of Europe because even now, they are submitted to the yoke of a 'communist mindset'. When expressing attitudes like these, my informants would often describe these things as 'remnants from the past' that have yet to be overcome. A 'communist heritage' that was not really 'supposed' to be present in Polish society, but that was introduced almost through a 'historic anomaly' (see Kundera, 1984; Mach, 1997; Pelkmans, 2006, p. 220; Verdery, 1996, 1999, p. 112; Wedel, 2001).

“ [There are] problems that we have to combat. Because there is something like a heritage of communism. We have to get rid of it. Sometimes there is still this mentality within people, because some people have grown up and have learned some kind of thinking during communism. [Such as] Attitude to life, expectation from the state. Not taking their life in their own hands, just expecting that everything will be given to them, and in the... also the lack of politeness. I think that is something like the heritage of communism. Ignorance, maybe.

— Monika

When asked whether this 'communist thinking' is present in all people's minds equally, Monika replied that among the younger generation, it is "not so visible, but it's still in the people, because they are brought up in the company of their parents, who are just used to do it". However, when asked whether she practices this 'communist thinking' herself because of this, she replied that:

“ When you travel a lot, study abroad, meet with people, you have a different experience. A different way of thinking. You find different solutions, lifestyles and models. Entertainment, you can have it. Something that brings you satisfaction. Maybe you feel just the thing that you are more conscious about what you can do with your life.

— Monika

As I found with most informants, they explicitly defined themselves as a "generation" that travels a lot, learns about other languages and nations, and can be open to other cultures because they are *confident* of their own national identity. This enabled them to be 'open to Europe' as well, whereas they felt that the 'older generation' was 'still closed' to Europe due to historical experiences.

“ This older generation is still afraid of [Europe]. Because there is this wars, and they are still afraid of wars, and this communist regime in Poland. And we younger people we are more confident. We want to travel, to know other cultures, other nationalities, kitchen, haha. It's not a problem for us [...]

— Teresa

This differentiation between themselves as people for whom the past is “not a problem” on the one hand, and the ‘others’ as people who are “still” struggling with communist and WWII memories on the other, resembles closely what Morawska has called the ‘it does not matter anymore’ and the *trudna polskosc* (‘difficult Polishness’) orientations (2003, p. 176).

The difference between these ‘generations of Polishness’ and how they are divided on (among other things) ‘European’ issues clearly came to the fore during the election for the Sejm in October 2007. According to my informants, the people in the ‘old generation’ consistently support specific, ‘dubious’ political parties ‘without even thinking’. These forces were mainly embodied by the *Law and Justice* (PiS) political party (see Figure 2 for an example of this rhetoric), which put the Kaczynski twins on the posts of Prime Minister and President of Poland between 2005 and 2007. In their eyes, the politicians of such parties represent a large, xenophobic, ‘closed’, religious, and conservative majority that ‘doesn’t think’. This in turn leads to these ‘incompetent’ politicians representing Poland in Europe, consequently resulting in the publication of various ‘embarrassing’ messages in international media. However, rather than simply an aversion to the national government in general or the politics of the PiS coalition in particular, my informants maintained a frame of ‘Othering’ towards all things this ‘old’ political style symbolized to them; conservatism, euro-scepticism, and amateurism. Beyond (but including) national politics, to them this affected Polish society at large.

“ That is [a] thing that I’m ashamed of. In our country, everything is working so badly. The government, the plans, construction, they are working so slow, they are not working properly. Everywhere you go, everything is not well organized. You know, you go to the best hotels and the service is horrible.

— Monika

“ It happens all the time. All the time. I feel ashamed of Poland every time I take up a foreign newspaper, like ‘The Economist’, ‘Der Spiegel’, any important foreign newspaper. [...] The newspapers that everyone reads; they impact your way of thinking. [...] Most of the time, when I read any of these foreign newspapers, I would say that I am ashamed of Polish politicians, and the general Polish public. [...] They should not behave like this. They should behave like *professional* politicians. They should behave like everyone around us.

— Marcin, original emphasis



**Figure 2** - “One nation, one party, one leader” (my translation). A satirical election campaign poster depicting one of the Kaczynski twins as a grandmother. It appeared in the left-wing newspaper NIE, 18 October 2007.

For my informants, 'Europe' clearly was a very important issue in the political debate surrounding the most recent (October 2007) elections (for a discussion on Polish national politics regarding the EU, see Millard, 1999). Most young people that I discussed the topic with, almost immediately started to ask questions about how people in the Netherlands see Poland following the actions of their "stupid politicians". Alternatively, they started to offer apologies for the behaviour of their political representatives. In both cases, they were specifically referring to the 2005-2007 government of "the twins" (PiS), and they would distance themselves from this 'kind of thinking' by representing themselves to be of another generation. This is exemplified by Szymon's response to the eurosceptical (PiS) political rhetoric that EU membership will deprive Poland of its national identity:

“ It is the same way of thinking as my grandpa. And they... I don't know... How can *you*, the Netherlands, Germany, France, influence Poland? *How?* [rhetorical] We have our nationality. We are Polish. We have got our own culture, we are different, we will not lose it because, you know, we've got open borders and it's easier to invest in our country.

— Szymon (original emphases)

Needless to say, my informants were quite relieved that the *Civic Platform* (PO) party won the elections, as Julia indicates: "I was really proud of Poles during [these] elections. [...] This is the first time that I really saw people reacting to the whole craziness in the political world". Nevertheless, even with the apparent lack of sympathy for PiS and all that it symbolized among the youth around me and other higher educated people I met, the party still managed to get 32,11% of the votes. This is actually 5,11 percentage points *higher* than in the 2005 elections. Suffice it to say that the Polish political context paints a somewhat divided picture. Support for the EU, but also an identification with Europe is intrinsically connected with this political, social and generational gap, as I noticed the importance that these higher educated young people attached to how 'European' Poland was in the eyes of other (western) Europeans.

### Central Europe and the return to 'normality'

As Teresa pointed out on page 16, being part of 'Europe' is "not a problem" because younger people are more confident", linking this attitude directly to a different perspective on historical events like the Second World War and Poland's communist period. Because of a relative 'detachment' from Poland's difficult past ('trudna polskosc', see Morawska, 2003, p. 176), they as a 'generation' can be proud of Poland and embrace 'Europe' at the same time. However, with regard to the 'level' of Europeaness of Poles and Poland, my informants regularly expressed some doubt. Teresa's analysis of Polishness exposes this tension:

“ [...] it's a problem of Polish people that all the time we think that *Polish people are good*, we are the best... On the other hand *we are on the end of Europe*. On the other hand [still] *we are on that [western] side of Eastern Europe*; we are better than Russians or something like this. And when we are abroad in this eastern part of Europe, and we see something like [the 'destruction' of Polish heritage by Ukrainians, JM] we think; 'how can they do that, we are so great!', so fantastic, so hmmm...

— Teresa, my emphases, my remarks between brackets<sup>39</sup>

She explicitly opposes 'being good' to being 'on the end of Europe', suggesting a positive evaluation of *not* being 'on the end of Europe'. On the other hand, she indicates that Poland is on the western side of Eastern Europe, which – according to her – makes them 'better' than the 'real' Eastern Europeans (i.e. Russians).

I argue that this ‘somewhat marginal’ position, but also the *move away* from this position is enacted through the reinvention of the concept of ‘Central Europe’ vis-à-vis Eastern and Western Europe. Its predecessor, the German concept of *Mitteleuropa*, came into usage for the first time around the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (see Philipps, 2008; Stirk, 1994). It was important in the legitimization of the German wish for expansion into the Central European area during the First and Second World War (Katzenstein, 1997). Following the end of the Second World War, Europe was divided politically into an Eastern and a Western part during the Cold War period. However, while in the Western part of Europe, *Mitteleuropa* remained largely absent from public discourse, it continued to have a place in intellectual circles in countries like the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland (ibid., see also Garton Ash, 1989). With the fall of communism, and the gradual decline of the stark East-West division in Europe, came the reinvention of the concept of ‘Central Europe’ (Katzenstein, 1997; Rupnik, 1990). In the 1980’s, “the promotion of the slogan ‘Central Europe’ had a political goal [...]” (Tomaszewski, 2001, p. 34), because it symbolized the yearning for independence from the Soviet Bloc. Then, Central Europe could be defined as the area that “geographically lies in the middle, culturally in the West, and politically in the East” (Kundera, as quoted in Tomaszewski, 2001, p. 35). However, despite the collapse of the Communist Bloc and the subsequent independence of Central European states, ‘Central Europe’ has remained a relevant category, and has arguably even become more important in contemporary Europe.

With the expansion of the Western European sphere of cooperation and economical / political integration Eastwards, the meaning and definition of Central Europe shifted again. Among my informants, there were two ways in which ‘Central Europe’ was defined. First, it was framed as a ‘cultural area’ with a shared historical experience, as Tomasz indicated:

“ We have the same historical experience [as] the Hungarians for example [...] And this makes us like, understand each other easier. But this does not make us totally different like a different world from other parts of Europe. Just a little closer, but not necessarily in a nostalgic way. I’m not saying that I like to spend time more with Hungarians than I do with Spanish. But if I go out or live with Hungarian people, some things are just easier to understand. Like I don’t have to explain that I’m eating my meal to the very last drop, because I was raised in a country where food was hardly accessible. If I go to Hungary, it is obvious, but if I go to Spain, I may have to explain it.

— Tomasz

Second, and more importantly, perhaps, Central Europe was seen as not so much a distinctive category *per sé*, but rather as an expression of enduring liminality; of being *neither* ‘Eastern’ *nor* ‘Western’. Kamila phrased this quite strikingly: “Central is what is not on the East or the West”. Differently put:

“ Central Europe would be exactly the area that was always asked whether it belongs to the East or to the West. And we don’t know, so usually they said we are central. [...] Because we are always asked whether we are pro-Russian or pro-European Union, we just say we’re Central.

— Julia

This ‘neither/nor’ frame of Central Europe was expressed very often by my informants. They were neither Eastern, nor Western; *therefore*, they were Central. I argue that these blurry boundaries allowed my informants to use the concept of Central Europe to express *change*. They employed the concept in order to perform – and be part of – a shift from a difficult past in ‘the East’ towards a ‘better’, cosmopolitan future as ‘Europeans’:

“ We used to be called Eastern Europe. [...] But right now I think we are Central Europe. We are not like Ukrainians, Belarusians and so on. And we are not the same as Germany and Austria. We are in the middle. We are not like Eastern, we are not like Western.

— Szymon

This dynamic aspect of European ‘areas’ was often stated quite literally by my informants, conceptualizing Central Europe as the area that is ‘not yet’ at ‘the same level’ as Western Europe. When I asked people how to define Central Europe, they would often describe it using words like “still”, “not yet”, or “catching up” before referring to what they saw as *Western* European qualities.

“ We are *still* not prepared for [a smoothly working society] I think. We are *still* sometimes *behind the rest of Europe*. We’re *catching up*. It *takes some time until* we have the same standards, the same service, or just cultural stuff. [...] We need to *catch up* some politeness to deal with people, because I *still* don’t think we have a high standard in this. [...] I was travelling and getting to know some other stuff in Germany, Austria, and I’m coming here [in Poland] and I’m disappointed and I’m noticing [these bad things]. I wasn’t noticing it before. I wasn’t *conscious* about it before. And learning new things, learning new places, I just noticed, *we are far behind the others*. [...] It is *changing*, but very slowly, it *will take many years*.

— Monika, my emphases

Following such changes (that may or may not be expected to *actually* happen), would be a redefinition of what is Eastern, Central, and Western Europe as well:

“ Szymon: Have you heard our plans [ironically]? Our Prime Minister said that Poland will be another Ireland because of our economic growth. He promised. We’ll see [sceptical].  
JM: What will happen to Poland if this will happen?  
Szymon: It will be more Western. The difference between countries like the Czech Republic and Poland compared to Ukraine and Belarus will be bigger and bigger.  
JM: Would you still call it Central Europe?  
Szymon: No [resolutely]. It will become Western Europe.

Here the economic discourse was mostly used to express a number of other qualities of Central Europe that are seen to be in flux. However, when discussing the subject further, many would indicate that being ‘closer to the western part of Europe’ actually means more than simply improving the country’s economy. According to Anastazia, it also means “to educate the young generation, to open up the borders, and increase the level of awareness to religions, customs, cultures. To be open-minded, to travel, live, and work in other countries”. My informants felt that they themselves as a ‘generation’ were the very fabric of this transformation, as Anastazia indicates:

“ Something *still* has to *change*, and we have to *run very fast to get to Europe*. Because it is our *point at the horizon where we want to be*. We want to be as good as Germany, France. As big, as important, as well know. Because we are not. We have big unemployment, poverty, a bad government. These things *should change*. But I think the new generation is on the right way to change it, so probably it will.

— Anastazia, my emphases

'Getting to Europe', as Anastazia phrases it in the quote above, was conceptualized by my informants as a 'natural' process that would lead Poland 'back' to 'normality', ridding itself from the 'heritage of communism' (see above), and 'returning' to its place 'in Europe'. Central Europe's socialist experience was seen as "deviating from 'natural' Western history" (Pelkmans, 2006, p. 220; see also Wedel, 2001).

“ Monika: Because people [in Poland nowadays] are travelling, they are more open, you know. [...] They notice that their life is on a different level. They can afford more things, they... they have different standards of life, they are learning new things, they are more civilized.

JM: Is that a good direction for Poland to go?

Monika: To become more civilized? Yes, of course, haha.

JM: How would you feel about Poland becoming completely like Western Europe?

Monika: Yes. [I would like it] to become normal.

JM: Normal?

Monika: Hmhm [confirms].

On the road to 'normality', Poland's accession to the European Union in 2004 as well as to the Schengen border union in 2007 were both conceived as clear moves in the right direction. This movement was seen as Poland becoming "more European" (Julia), and therefore "more civilized" (Monika). When I asked my informants how they felt about entering the EU and/or Schengen, they replied they felt more "Western", more "European" (Julia), and that they "are more important now" (Wiktor).

“ I think after the access to the European Union, I felt more like Western or Central Europe than Eastern Europe. And sometimes when I hear about Poland as one of the countries of Eastern Europe, I say like 'hey! We're not in Eastern Europe!', haha! Western European because of theory. [...] Because of being involved in a Western process. That's where it started, actually. [...] I remember when we were talking about [accession] we still had one leg in communism. [...] It was very important for Poland to become a part of Europe. Not of Eastern Europe, or a Russian something...

— Julia

“ I can really remember that moment when Poland entered the European Union. I remember I felt that we were a little more European now too. [...] Before, we used to be outside of Europe, now we were back in.

— Olga

“ I felt more normal [when Poland joined Schengen]. It's just that I felt that we were more civilized, you know. We are allowed to travel freely without treating us like a lower category national, and I feel really sorry for people who are trying to cross the Polish border, like Ukraine....

— Monika

When asked what would happen if Poland was to develop economically to the same level as Western Europe, they would say that it 'should' also become more "polite", "normal", and "civilized". Accession to the EU and Schengen were seen as (instrumental) steps towards a "future" (Szymon) where Poland would be 'free of its past'.

## Conclusion

With this article, I hope to have given a modest, yet valuable contribution to the exciting body of literature on the emerging European identity. The conclusions in this work should be seen as supportive to Bruter (2003, 2004, 2005a) and other's (e.g. Smith, 1991, 1992, 1995) analytical distinction between 'civic' and 'cultural' components of political identities. The quantitative and qualitative findings complement each other in a number of ways.

First, the variables included in the multilevel analysis of *Eurobarometer* data to measure age, education, left-right placement, and social group, relate to the discussions on Polish political discourse mentioned in the qualitative section. I found a significant negative relation between age and European cultural identification, as well as a positive relation between this identity component and the level of education. This, together with the fact that students (and managers) are the social group that identifies most strongly with Europe according to the quantitative analysis, indicates that especially the younger higher educated students feel emotionally attached to Europe. This adds width to the qualitative findings, as it suggests that the transnational, European network of students that my informants often expressed to identify themselves with, actually does seem to relate to an empirical reality in a wider European context. Conversely, the quantitative findings are provided with depth regarding the Polish case and perhaps even cases like it, as it explicates the framework of national politics and the attitude towards Europe of the higher educated youth. It offers an additional insight into the social dynamics underlying the 'cold' figures, because it explicates the social and historical framework in which such attitudes are conceived.

Second, Poland's 'return to Europe' can be seen as part of a larger 'reconfiguration' of national and European identifications. While my qualitative investigation confronted me with young Poles enthusiastically embracing the possibilities that the 'new' Europe has to offer them, the quantitative analysis suggests that many people in the 'older' member-states actually seem to express lower levels of cultural identification with Europe. This might imply that European 'core ideals' such as peace and prosperity resonate more clearly with people in the 'new' member states than with those in the 'old' ones. In 'old' Europe, peace and prosperity might already be taken for granted after one or more peaceful and prosperous generations have passed. The discourse on the 'communist heritage' that my informants expressed confirms that this idea is indeed still very much alive. Moreover, 'European ideals' are seen as a way to 'get rid of' this problematic past, as they are seen to have the potential to 'move' Central Europe (and thereby Poland) Westwards, where they can finally be a 'normal' country again.

Finally, it should be stressed that if there is anything that both the qualitative as well as the quantitative analyses have shown in their own right, it is that national and European identity should *not* be conceptualized or measured as mutually exclusive social phenomena. In fact, both suggest that a strong emotional identification with the nation-state *enforces* rather than prevents a cultural identification with Europe. Whether we are using quantitative or qualitative approaches, it is only when researchers like ourselves ask people to make the choice between *either* of these 'nested' identities, that people tend to select their nation as their collective identity. In their daily reality, however, such an exclusionist principle of identification is unlikely to exist.

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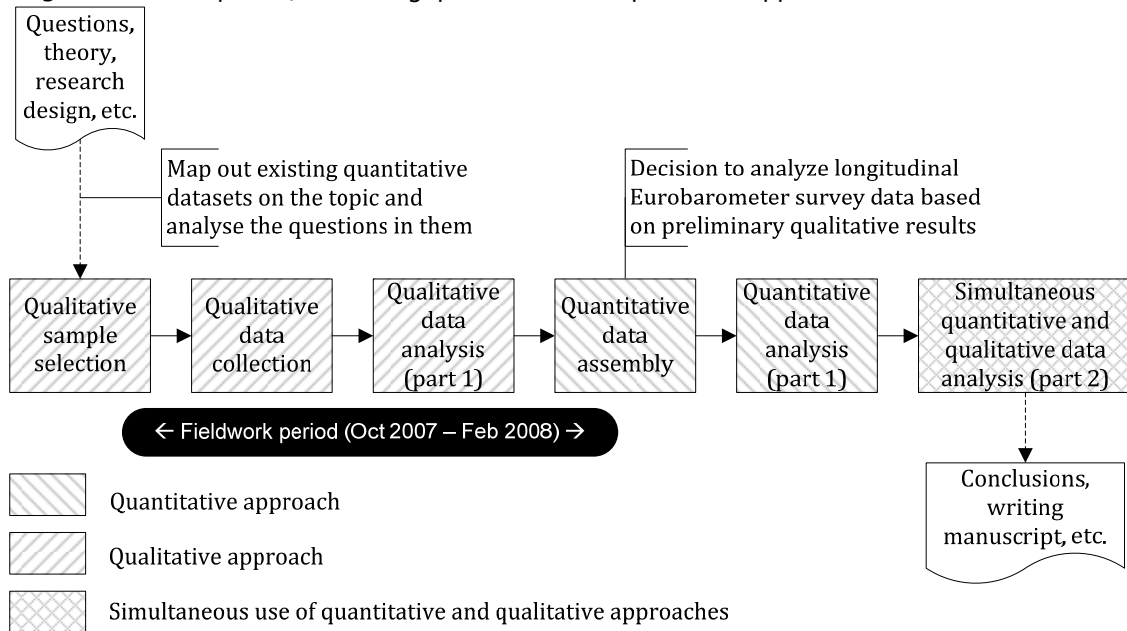
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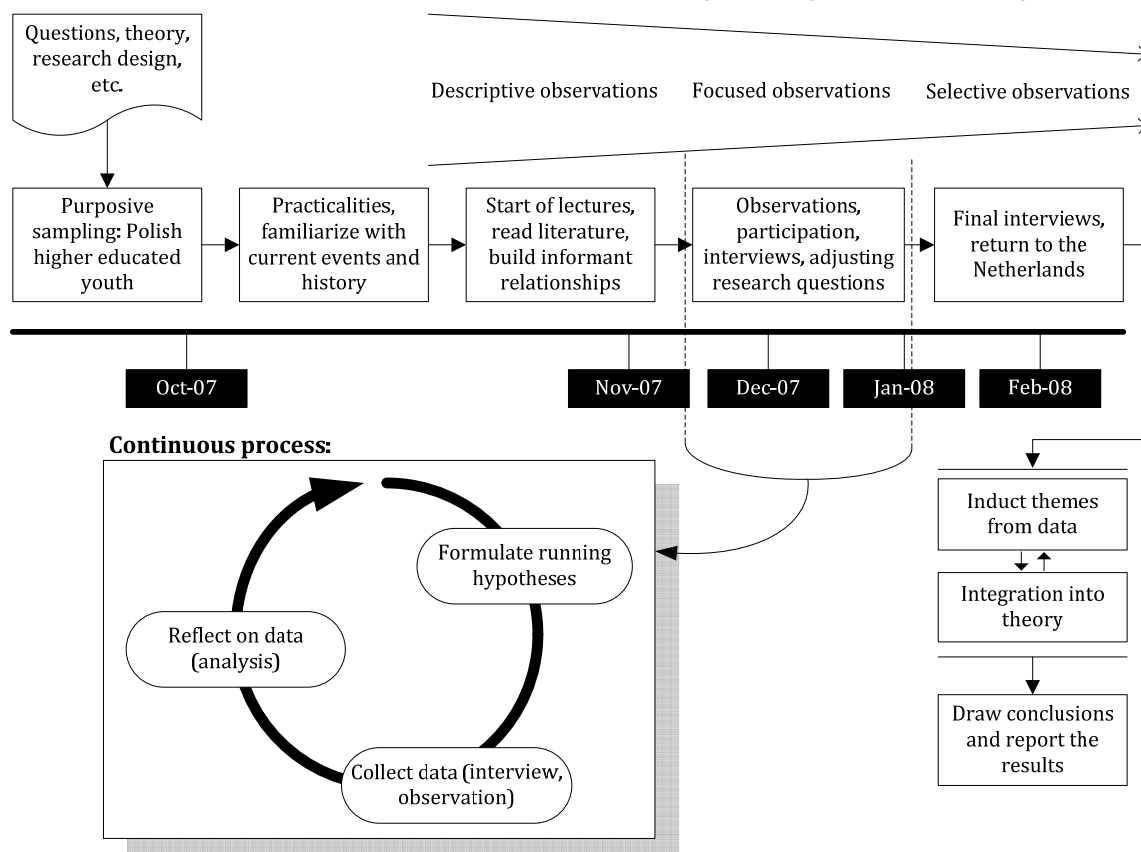
## Appendix I – General research process

The general research process for the entire research project as well as the steps undertaken in the qualitative data collection are schematically depicted below. Please note that these steps refer to the research process as a whole, which means that it has a wider scope than the present paper.

**Figure 3 – Research sequence, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches.**



**Figure 4 – Sequence of the qualitative data collection and analysis (partly based on Spradley, 1980).**



## Appendix II – Factor analysis results

A confirmatory factor analysis revealed that the four items<sup>44</sup> that are used to measure European identity could indeed be divided into two distinct factors, also when similar measurements for national identification were included in the analysis. The results of this factor analysis are provided in Table 2 below and graphically displayed in Figure 5. The two ‘emotional’ items taken to measure the cultural component of European identification form one dimension with high factor loadings, while the two ‘instrumental’ items, used to measure a civic sense of Europeanness show high factor loadings on the second dimension.

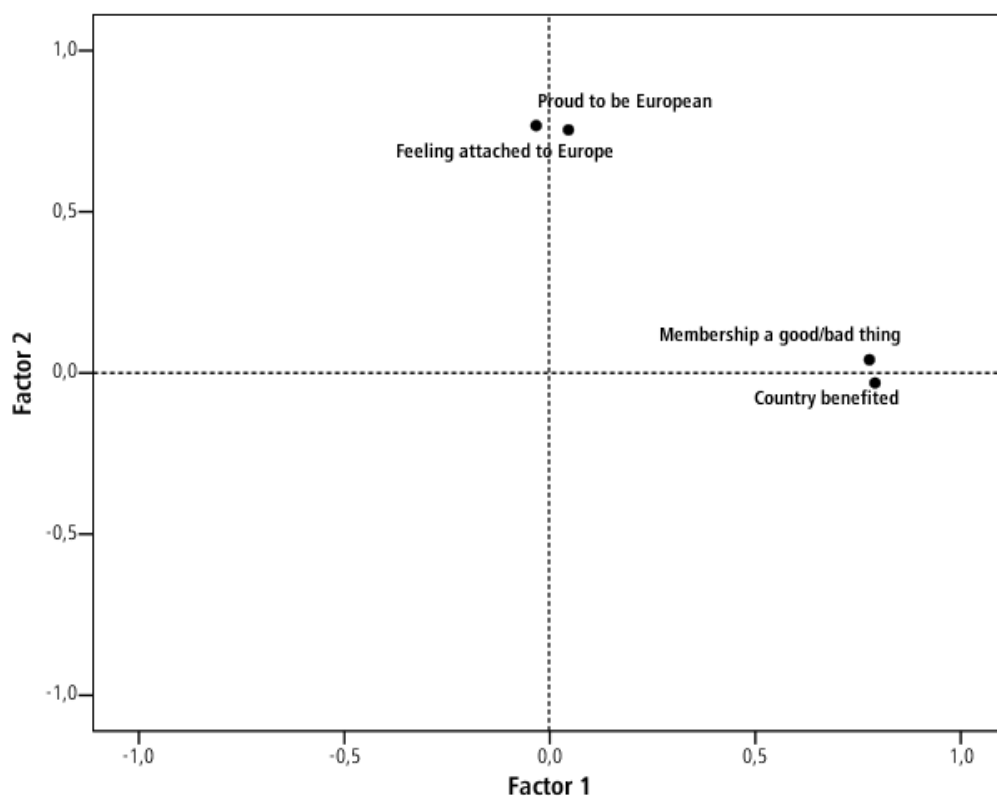
**Table 2** - Factor analysis of civic and cultural scale items: principal axis factoring, oblique rotation (missing listwise).

	$h^2$	Factor 1	Factor 2
Membership a good/bad thing	0.640	<b>0.791</b>	-0.031
Country benefits from EU	0.601	<b>0.777</b>	0.041
Feeling attached to Europe	0.563	-0.034	<b>0.768</b>
Proud to be European	0.607	0.045	<b>0.754</b>

*Source: pooled Eurobarometer data (2001-2007)*

The items in both resulting scales correlated significantly with sufficient strength at 0.585 for the cultural and 0.637 for the civic scale. Both scales also proved to be internally consistent, with reliability statistics (Cronbach’s alpha) of 0.737 for the cultural and 0.734 for the civic scale. The two scales are significantly and positively correlated amongst each other (0.339,  $p < 0.01$ ), which is not very surprising; people feeling more emotionally attached to Europe can be expected to support its political and economic integration as well.

**Figure 5** - Factor plot of cultural (factor 1) and civic (factor 2) components: principal axis factoring, oblique rotation.



# Notes

<sup>1</sup> Throughout this paper, I will use the words ‘identity’ and ‘identification’ interchangeably for stylistic considerations. In all cases, however, it refers to the social interaction and process of negotiation; to the verb rather than the noun (see Jenkins, 2004, p. 5; Mach, 1993b, p. 6).

<sup>2</sup> Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe

<sup>3</sup> *Standard Eurobarometer 68.0* (Fieldwork between September and November 2007).

<sup>4</sup> The highest rates of opposition were found in the United Kingdom (28% opposition vs. 34% support), Austria (26% vs. 38%) and Finland (21% vs. 45%). Relatively high levels of support were particularly visible in Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Belgium, Ireland, Poland and Romania (all over 70% support).

<sup>5</sup> This ‘democratic deficit’ remains, even though the Maastricht Treaty, signed in 1992, explicitly affirms the Union’s intention to create “an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe, in which decisions are taken as closely as possible to the citizen” (Official Journal of the European Communities, 2002, p. 10).

<sup>6</sup> Such statements had been made earlier in official documents in 1992 (in the Maastricht Treaty; see Delgado-Moreira, 1997) and 1973 (in the Copenhagen Declaration; see Ralph Grillo, 2007, p. 69).

<sup>7</sup> Both of which are nation-states that, interestingly, are often assumed to have a social relevance at higher levels of abstraction (i.e. *vis-à-vis* Europe) than most other nation-states. Furthermore, for political and historical reasons, the relevance of either the USA and/or Russia as a European ‘Other’ is likely to depend also on the *part* of Europe that is under examination (i.e. Eastern, Central, or Western Europe).

<sup>8</sup> The exact question wording in *Eurobarometer 64* was: “In the near future, do you see yourself as being (nationality) only, (nationality) and European, European and (nationality) or just European?” (European Communities, 2005, p. 31). The bracketed part “(nationality)” was of course replaced by the appropriate adjective (e.g. ‘British’) in the actual survey interview, and the questions were translated to the respondent’s native language.

<sup>9</sup> Combining the categories “nationality only” (41%) and “nationality and European” (48%). Note that “nationality and European” was the most popular category if Europe is to be seen as a whole. The exact extent to which people feel European is of course impossible to derive from this particular survey data. In a longitudinal perspective, this answering category is almost always more popular than the “nationality only” option (European Commission, 2006, p. 45).

<sup>10</sup> Combining the categories “European and nationality” (7%) and “European only” (2%).

<sup>11</sup> Against 28% who did not feel proud to be European.

<sup>12</sup> A note should be made of the fact that his sample was somewhat skewed toward a younger age, and that people were recruited among students and in universities (Bruter, 2004, pp. 24-25, 38). Both aspects arguably have their impact on Bruter’s findings. However, it is the *process* that is under analysis, rather than the extent to which these findings can be generalized to a broader population. Furthermore, this selection bears a close resemblance to my own selection of informants for the qualitative data.

<sup>13</sup> Combining quantitative and qualitative research strategies is still quite rare in the social sciences. This is a pity, because the application of mixed methods has a great potential for discovering new ways of understanding social phenomena (see, among others Sosulski & Lawrence, 2008).

<sup>14</sup> Eurobarometers have been conducted since the 1970’s, but the EU’s ‘new’ member states in Central and Eastern Europe have only been surveyed since 2001, in an initially separate project called Candidate Countries Eurobarometer. As of the Eurobarometer number 62.0 (October-November 2004), these countries were included in the regular surveys. On theoretical (EU membership) and pragmatic (availability of data in all years) grounds, I decided to drop Turkey, Macedonia, and Croatia from my analyses. This resulted in an of a total number of 122,484 respondents in the analyses, distributed across 29 geographical units. In sum, there are 27 countries included in the analysis. However, Northern Ireland is taken separately from the rest of the UK, and Germany is split up between East and West Germany, because of different historical and economic backgrounds.

<sup>15</sup> There are a few exceptions to this approximate number based on population size: Germany (East and West) and the UK have larger samples, while Luxembourg, Cyprus and Malta have smaller sample sizes per data set.

<sup>16</sup> Since identification is by definition contextual, one might ask whether it can be ‘measured’ in the first place. After all, does an individual identify with a social group or construct if this identification is not relevant at the time of measurement? In other words: should we take our respondents to China before asking them about their European identity?

<sup>18</sup> Attachment to Europe and pride of being European for the cultural identification scale, and country has(/not) benefited and good/bad thing that the respondent’s country is an EU member-state for the civic identity scale.

<sup>20</sup> A correlation of at least 0.6 was the threshold adhered to.

<sup>21</sup> Cronbach’s alpha was 0.729 for the civic scale, and 0.738 for the cultural scale.

<sup>22</sup> A former member of the *Sejm*.

<sup>23</sup> Not in the last place through mobility programmes such as *Socrates/Erasmus* and *European Voluntary Service* (see European Commission, 2007a).

<sup>27</sup> The data and graphs for other countries are available on request.

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<sup>28</sup> The only other three countries that showed a higher level of cultural identification than civic identification were Austria, Finland, and Sweden.

<sup>29</sup> I checked whether including either of the two national identity variables separately had any different result, but in both cases the effect of age reversed. This reversal seems to indicate a strong relation between age and national identification. Intermediate regression models are available from the author on request.

<sup>30</sup> Unravelling this relationship in detail would require a dedicated study and is beyond the scope of the current paper.

<sup>32</sup> Even though these studies often did not yet include the ‘new’ EU member-states. Moreover, older studies most often focused on the civic identity component rather than the cultural component.

<sup>34</sup> I.e. in country X, national identity has a different impact on European identity than in country Y.

<sup>36</sup> Moreover, the small change in -2 log likelihood of this final regression model is not a significant improvement upon the prior model. This implies that taking into account whether a country is a former USSR territory or satellite state does not significantly improve how well the model explains the variance of the dependent variable.

<sup>39</sup> It should be pointed out that in this excerpt, Teresa was trying to get her point across and was deliberately exaggerating the ‘average’ response of the ‘people on the street’. It does not necessarily reflect her own opinion completely. Furthermore, when she said “[...] we are on that side of Eastern Europe [...]”, she pointed to the left/western side on a map that I had brought.

<sup>44</sup> Attachment to Europe and pride of being European for the cultural identification scale, and country has/(not) benefited and good/bad thing that the respondent’s country is an EU member-state for the civic scale.